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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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PHILADELPHIA DRUG TRAFFICKER SENTENCED

Greenbelt, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that David Michael Beckford, age 37, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte to 170 months incarceration for conspiracy to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute over 1000 kilograms of marijuana.

According to testimony presented at trial, Beckford was involved in transporting by trucks thousands of pounds of marijuana from California and Arizona to points along the East Coast, including New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Beckford and his codefendants primarily used tractor trailers belonging to TC Trucking Company located in Damascus, Maryland and owned and operated in part by codefendant Tennyson Harris. Members of a Jamaican drug trafficking organization calling itself the "Champagne Crew" and operating in Arizona and New York testified at trial that Beckford and others orchestrated the transportation of large quantities of marijuana by using the tractor trailers and reselling some of the marijuana in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and points along the East Coast. On December 20, 2002, a jury found the defendant guilty of conspiracy

to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute marijuana.

During the sentencing hearing today, U.S. District Judge Messitte found that Beckford helped transport over 1000 kilograms of marijuana and that Beckford's sentence should be increased because of the possession of guns by conspiracy members. All of Beckford's codefendants have either pleaded guilty or been convicted following a jury trial.

This case was investigated by the U.S. Customs Service, in conjunction with the Montgomery County Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Prince George's County Police Department, the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office in California, the California Highway Patrol, the Mitchell County Sheriff's Office in Texas, the Greensboro Police Department in North Carolina and the Las Vegas Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Mythili Raman and Steven M. Dunne.